

# Farm/Herd Report - Wisconsin

## U.S. Dairy Forage Research Center - Annual Dairy Operations Report

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L.L. Strozinski - Herd Manager

| Herd Statistics                 |                    | Change from<br>previous year |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------------|
| <b><i>Herd Inventory</i></b>    |                    |                              |
| Milking cows                    | 280                | -20                          |
| Dry cows 57                     | +7                 |                              |
| average cow age                 | 45 months          | 0                            |
| percent first lactation         | 41%                | 0                            |
| percent second lactation        | 27%                | -2                           |
| percent third lactation         | 17%                | +2                           |
| percent greater than third      | 15%                | 0                            |
| Herd replacements               | 315                | 0                            |
| <b>Total</b>                    | <b>652</b>         | <b>-13</b>                   |
| Rumen Fistulated Cows           | 22                 |                              |
| <b><i>Herd Performance</i></b>  |                    |                              |
| Cows calved                     | 333                | -35                          |
| Heifer calves born              | 160 live + 13 dead | (-4)                         |
| Bull calves born                | 181 live + 14 dead | (-4)                         |
| Heifer calves died < 1 year old | 4 (2.5%)           |                              |
| DHIA rolling herd average       |                    |                              |
| milk                            | 22,468 lbs         | + 2131                       |
| protein                         | 720 lbs.           | + 69                         |
| fat                             | 876 lbs.           | + 129                        |
| Milk sold in 1997               | 6,937,771 lbs.     | + 638,850                    |
| Heifer calves sold              | 17                 | + 8                          |
| Bull calves sold                | 180                | + 1                          |
| Cows sold                       | 144                | + 13                         |
| cows culled for:                |                    |                              |
| reproduction problems           | 43                 | 0                            |
| poor production                 | 15                 | + 1                          |
| poor udder                      | 27                 | + 7                          |
| poor feet and legs              | 11                 | + 2                          |
| mastitis                        | 31                 | + 8                          |
| other                           | 17                 | 0                            |
| Cattle sales revenue            | \$72,555.43        | +17,596.50                   |
| <b><i>Herd Reproduction</i></b> |                    |                              |
| Average days open               | 125                | + 2                          |
| Average calving interval        | 12.99 months       | -.03                         |
| Average services per conception | 2.6                | + .5                         |
| Average age at first calving    | 24 months          | 0                            |

The USDFRC herd size has decreased slightly in 1997. A review of the herd statistics shows a net reduction of 13 mature cows in the herd from one year ago. Culling pressure has increased slightly, especially for the reasons of poor udders and mastitis. In late 1996 and continuing through 1997 the herd experienced a considerable mastitis problem with average somatic cell counts of the herd peaking at 611,000 in August. Professional assistance to identify specific problem areas and recommended corrective action was obtained from the University of Wisconsin School of Veterinary Medicine. Corrective action, including culling of chronic problem cows, has resulted in a significant decline in the mastitis problem as evidenced by the present somatic cell count average of 218,000. Our herd goal is to maintain a somatic cell count of 200,000 or less. Despite the mastitis problem, our DHIA rolling herd average for milk production increased significantly in 1997 to 22,468 pounds. Our herd recently received special recognition from the Wisconsin DHIA for increasing the rolling herd average by 2355 pounds in one year. Current average production per cow per day is 70.5 pounds. The farm "mailbox" net price received per hundred weight of milk ranged from \$11.736 to \$14.800 with an average of \$13.169 for 1997.

Cull cattle prices were somewhat stronger in 1997 but bull calf prices have remained extremely low and variable.

Research activities with the herd continued at a high level in 1997 with 355 milking animals involved in nine different trials during the year. There is an increase in numbers of cows on full and multiple lactation experiments. Very seldom does a mature cow freshen and not go onto an experiment. Most but not all first calf heifers are also used on experiments.

One full time position was added back to the dairy staff in 1997. This was a very welcome addition to ease the labor pressure and improve the overall attention to details which had slipped somewhat in the

previous year. With unemployment levels in the area at record low levels it has become increasingly difficult to fill vacant positions at the farm through the cumbersome civil service system. Action has been taken to obtain approval to hire through a critical recruitment procedure which has the potential to streamline the process considerably.

This autumn the construction of the new 48 free stall facility was completed. On December 2, dry cows were moved into the new facility. This new facility will be used in the summer in connection with the grazing research and in the winter will be used by dry cows. A remodeling project to reposition and strengthen the free stall dividers in the existing facility is nearing completion. This project is being done by the field crew. It is a welcome improvement that should stand the test of time and improve the overall function of the stalls.

Two new cooperative projects were started in 1997. One is a project working with the University of Wisconsin School of Vet Medicine. The school uses our herd to teach reproductive physiology and palpation techniques. Supervised students have also taken over a portion of the routine herd health and vaccination program. This cooperative effort provides valuable hands on experience for students while easing the work load of USDFRC staff. This win-win program has worked extremely well and may be expanded in the future. A second new cooperative project just under way is with Trans-Ova Genetics in Iowa. Trans-Ova is producing transgenic calves and is in need of colostrum from a closed, vaccinated, leukosis free herd for the newborn calves. USDFRC has agreed to collect colostrum, bleed colostrum donors and maintain appropriate records for a compensatory fee.

The farm continues to be a popular place to visit and we continue to host the return visits of many national and international organization tours.